

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-10

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R 021320Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3712

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 5411

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, LY

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN RELATIONS: VISIT OF TUNISIAN

MINISTER OF INTERIOR TO LIBYA, JULY 31- AUGUST 1

1. TUNISIAN MINISTER OF INTERIOR TAHAR BELKHODJA WAS SENT TO TRIPOLI FOR A ONE-DAY VISIT OVER JULY 31-AUG 1 AS SPECIAL EMISSARY OF PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA TO QADHAFI. THE PUBLICLY STATED PURPOSE OF THE TRIP WAS TO DELIVER A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM BOURGUIBA TO QADHAFI. BELKHODJA IS A CLOSE ADVISER TO BOURGUIBA, AND WAS USED FOR A SILMAR MISSION TO ALGERIA DURING THE SAHARA CRISIS.

2. UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN TRIPOLI ON THE AFTERNOON OF JULY 31, BELKHODJA WAS MET BY TAHA CHERIF BEN AMERU, LIBYAN MINISTER OF STATE FOR RCC AFFAIRS. IN A FORMAL MEETING LATER IN THE DAY THEY WERE JOINED BY THE LIBYAN UNDER SECRETARY OF INTERIOR, THE LIBYAN HIGH REPRESENTATIVE IN TUNIS, AND THE TUNISIANCHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN TRIPOLI. ACCORDING TO BELKHODJA'S STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS, THIS MEETING DEALT WITH "THE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS OF CERTAIN PROBLEMS OF INTEREST TO THE TWO COUTNRIES".

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3. BELKHODJA WAS THE NEXT DAY, AUGUST 1, RECEIVED BY QADHAFI, AT WHICH TIME HE DELIVERED BOURGUIBA'S MESSAGE AND RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM QADHAFI TO BE CARRIED BACK TO BOURGUIBA.

4. IN AN AIRPORT PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED UPON HIS RETURN TO TUNIS LATER ON AUGUST 1, BELKHODJA REPORTEDLY STATED THAT "THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE HAD MADE A FAVORABLE IMPACT ON COLONEL QADHAFI AND THAT THESE MEETINGS WILL BE FOLLOWED BY ENCOURAGING INITIATIVES SERVING THE INTERESTS OF BOTH COUNTRIES." BELKHODJA'S STATEMENT WAS CARRIED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF BOTH MORNING NEWSPAPERS ON AUGUST 2, WITH NO EDITORIALIZING OR FURTHER COMMENT.

5. IN A MEETING AMBASSADOR HELD WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTY ON AUGUST 2, FONMIN SAID THAT HE HAD SPOKEN WITH TAHAR BELKHODJA EARLIER IN DAY BY TELEPHONE (BELKHODLA WAS IN MONASTIR TO BRIEF PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA ON RESULTS OF TRIP). ACCORDING TO CHATTY, BELKHODJA BRIEFLY SUMMARIZED THE RESULTS OF THE VISIT AS "NOT VERY POSITIVE." MULCAHY

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